nor'east'r

USDA Forest Service

Northeastern Forest Experiment Station
Upper Darby, Pennsylvania 19082
(215) 596-1628
*May 1977*

# *Moving right along.....Upper Darby office to relocate*

*For years uninformed individuals have asked, "What's the Forest Service doing in Upper Darby?" Well, now they can ask, "What's the Forest Service doing in Broomall?"*

*In a few months Forest Service offices for Research and State and Private Forestry in the Northeast will indeed be in Broomall, and they'll be doing, well, exactly what they do now although in a newer, hopefully more pleasant atmosphere. The move marks the end of nearly a quarter century - 23 years - at 6816 Market Street.*

*To answer the questions many of you may have about the relocation, we're devoting this month's Nor'east'r to an interview with Bob Erickson, Assistant Director for Support Services. Bob tells us how the move came about and what to expect when we get there.*

*Nor'east'r:* **Describe the new building. Briefly, how and why did we decide on this site?**

*Erickson:* **The new Station/Area office is at 370 Reed Road, Broomall, Pa., 19008, on the south side of the Lawrence Park section of the township. This is about 5½ miles west of our present office.**

**The building itself is a new three-story masonry structure with entrance to the second floor at ground level in the back and on one end. We will occupy the two top floors and will have street level access to one lower floor. Also, before we move in the owner will build an addition to give us a separate and distinct entrance. With this two-floor arrangement we'll be able to consolidate the entire NE/NA program staff on the top floor and all of Support Services on the lower floor.**

**There will be an 80-car parking lot for our exclusive use and an additional 70 spaces available for the building generally.**

**In January the Directors appointed**

*The Southedge building in Broomall, Pa., will house offices for Research and State and Private Forestry in the Northeast.*

an ad hoc committee to analyze the alternatives, which included remaining in our present space. With the committee's analysis in hand the NE/NA Directors staff toured the Broomall building one Saturday. The staff agreed that the site should be selected over our current space in Upper Darby because it will 1) let us consolidate program and support staffs on two floors instead of five; 2) give us flexible office space that will lend itself to open landscaping and improved office environment; 3) provide off-street parking; 4) improve employee recruitment to a more desirable facility and location; 5) meet OSHA standards and 6) provide better security for employees and the office.

*Nor'east'r:* One question keeps coming back to haunt us -- what happened to plans to build in Radnor?

*Erickson:* For 13 years we owned seven acres of land at Radnor and had complete construction plans for a new four-story building. During this time, we were never able to secure financial backing for the project. By April 1975, the estimated cost of building at Radnor had escalated to over eight million dollars. Also, by that time the plans were so out of date that complete revision was necessary.

Since the prospects for funding did not look bright, and GSA wasn't interested in looking for better leased space as long as we had plans to build, the directors wrote the Chief in August of 1975 expressing concern for our future headquarters. They explained that the Upper Darby lease expired December 31, 1976; that the space and location at Upper Darby were inadequate to carry out programs, maintain employee morale, employee safety, and good office efficiency; and that 12 years had passed with no progress on the Radnor plans. They proposed that we drop the Radnor plan and work closely with GSA to find improved lease space.

The Chief concurred in October of 1975, and action was initiated to "trade" the Radnor land for 1400 acres of non-federal land within Allegheny National Forest.

*Nor'east'r:* What facilities -- lounges, meeting rooms, etc. -- are planned for the new building?

*Erickson:* The specific space layout won't be complete until June, but with better use of space (i.e., less furniture) we hope to provide for a master conference room, employee lounge and vending machine area, first-aid room, library, automatic data processing, and I&E audio-visual room.

Of our total of 35,500 net square feet, 21,000 is for offices; 4,500 is for conference, library, first-aid, lounges, ADP, and audio-visual support; and 10,000 is for publication, program, and warehouse storage, as well as mail-room, duplicating, and copying work space.

*Nor'east'r:* For visitors to headquarters, how accessible is the airport? What transportation is available, etc?

*Erickson:* Lawrence Park is much less accessible via public transportation than our present site. There are, however, three bus routes between Upper Darby and Lawrence Park, but taxis provide the best access from Media and along Baltimore Pike. Although taxi will also be the best way to go to and from the airport using Route 420, the "Paoli Limousine" runs hourly between the airport and the Alpine Inn in Springfield, and to Media.

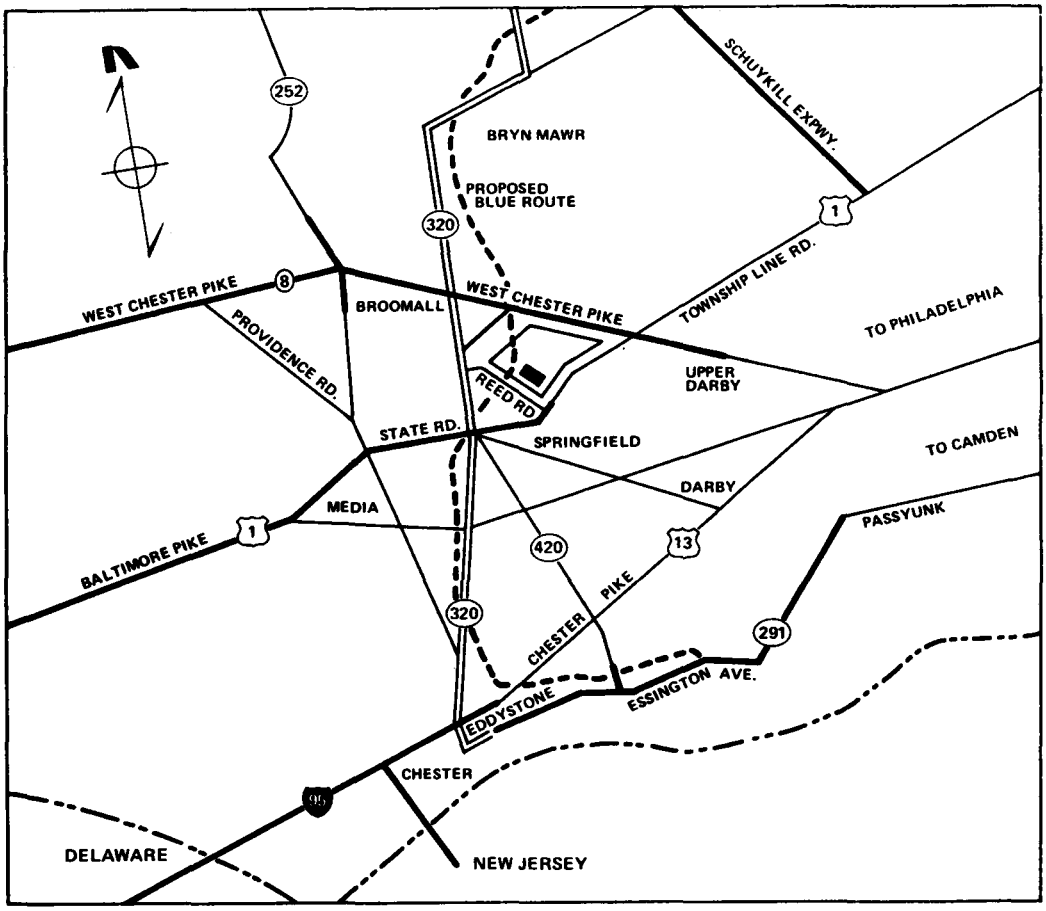
*Nor'east'r:* What's the proximity to restaurants, motels, public transportation?

*Erickson:* "The Kitchen" is a non-chain restaurant on the first floor of our building. It offers breakfast until 10:30 AM, and a wide range of hot and cold sandwiches until 5:00 PM each day. A Horn and Hardart restaurant is ½ mile away, and within 1½ miles are fast food (a Burger King), pizza, and more formal dining (the Lamb Tavern, Saw Mill Inn).

The building is three and a half miles from Baltimore Pike in Springfield (where the Alpine Inn is located), four miles from Newtown Square, and 4½ miles from Providence Inn in Media. Again, taxi seems to be the best transportation for motel guests.

*Nor'east'r:* How soon will a decision be made on flexitime? What system will be used?

*Erickson:* The staff has agreed on a so-called "flexitour" policy for head-




quarters. Every employee will have a chance to consider the plan before we move. If their supervisor approves, employees may select an eight-hour tour of duty between 7:00 AM and 5:30 PM, with a 30-minute, 45-minute, or one-hour midday break. This new "flexitour" schedule will be effective either on the date of the move, or within three pay periods after the move. After that, employees, with their supervisor's approval, may change their working tour three times in a twelve month period.

This should help us all to make best use of transportation systems and to satisfy our individual midday-break preferences.

*Nor'east'r:* How soon will we move?

*Erickson:* There are three major activities that will determine the actual date we move.

First, GSA "special projects" in Washington will arrange for a professional layout of our space. There is no question we need professional layout service to make the most efficient use of space, provide flexibility, and to give employees a bright, cheerful work environment. The design should be ready by June 5.

After this, the owner has sixty days to alter the building to meet our layout plan.

Last comes a complete review of our phone system needs and the installation of FTS service to meet the office layout. This is a must before we move. FTS Services is studying our phone system now and will decide how many phones and lines we need. They estimate three to four months to make the review, acquire the equipment, and complete the installation.

After that wordy answer, I look for a move date of September 1.

*Nor'east'r:* How long will the actual move take? How will it be organized?

*Erickson:* The physical move will be accomplished by contract mover. Except for library material and the publications stored in the basement, which will be boxed and unpacked by contract, each group will pack and unpack their own desk and bookcase contents. File cabinets can go as they are.

While the physical move of our office furniture and equipment should take about four days, we all will have prior preparations to make, such as furniture inventory and numbering, and

disposing of non-record files. This is beginning now and should not disrupt daily operations.

*Nor'east'r:* Will any of the services that Upper Darby performs for the field be curtailed or temporarily changed during the period when we move?

*Erickson:* We hope to do everything possible to make this relocation smooth, with a minimum of disruption.

Of course, a week or two on each side of the actual move will be a little hectic for everyone, both here and in the field. The physical move of furniture should take a weekend and one or two days before. Little, if any, operation will be going on at this time.

*Nor'east'r:* How much will it cost? Can you foresee eventual savings?

*Erickson:* We estimate $60,000 to accomplish the relocation. Much of this, by the way, is going to be provided by the Chief's office. There will be other costs, too, for such things as special equipment (shelving) and services (painting metal furniture) after we're settled.

Over the long run I see no dollar savings, as such, but surely recruiting, morale, and office efficiency will greatly improve.

*Nor'east'r:* Where are the nearest Government Printing Office (GPO) and postal services?

*Erickson:* The Broomall Post Office is on West Chester Pike about two miles from the office. GPO in Philadelphia will continue to provide our printing service.

*Nor'east'r:* When will telephone numbers be changed and how will you get the word out?

*Erickson:* As I mentioned, we've requested FTS installation of a modern phone system. Initially we will move our existing Centrex call numbers to Broomall pending installation of the new, less expense equipment next winter. Just as soon as we know the new numbers we'll send change notices to all Forest Service headquarters, people on our Publications and Information mailing lists, State Foresters, and cooperators. Information Services will notify their contacts directly.

*Nor'east'r:* Do you foresee any employee morale problems?

*Erickson:* I'm sure this depends on each individual's viewpoint and situation. The move <u>is</u> going to disrupt all of us in some way. In Support Services, I personally believe that having all of us on one level and out of the basement has to overshadow the negative impact of disruption.

The directors and staff firmly believe that the result of the move will be a much happier group of people.

*Nor'east'r:* What do you plan to do to ease the transportation problems the move will cause some employees? Are you purchasing any additional cars or vans?

*Erickson:* We've studied existing bus schedules with SEPTA and will make this information available to all employees. There are three different bus schedules serving the Lawrence Park area from Upper Darby and along West Chester Pike. Two go about every 25 minutes and one during morning and evening rush periods only. SEPTA says they will increase service, as needed, depending upon use.

Also, we hope to determine and make known car pool opportunities among our employees using a questionnaire.

This reduced public transportation to work induced the Directors to offer headquarters employees flexibility in choosing work tours.

We have requested three additional GSA vehicles for official use at Broomall. However, GSA has none to offer at this time.

*Nor'east'r:* Can you foresee the possibility of reduced services in any area of operation due to the move? If you foresee improvements, what specifically will they be?

*Erickson:* In my observation, services can only improve because of the move. I'm talking about services to our field units, the states, and all of our other customers.

Just consolidating the office on two floors, in an identified building, with groups that need to work together next to each other has to improve communication and responsiveness. I'm convinced that the limitations of our Upper Darby space has, to a great degree, dictated our operating style, attitude, and interactions with each other.